

also help keep our economy moving forward. Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has indicated again and again that reducing debt is preferable to a large tax cut.

I have saved the most important issue for last: Social Security and Medicare. Throughout the past year, as it appeared we would have a large projected budget surplus over the next ten years, I have said repeatedly that we should not raid the surplus for tax cuts until we protect Social Security and Medicare for the long term.

I have listened to many of my colleagues talk about the importance of returning money to taxpayers. Let me tell my colleagues there is no better return on the investment for taxpayers than saving Social Security and Medicare. This must be a top priority. If we fail to enact real reform, we will be judged harshly—and rightly so—by our children and grandchildren. Our Nation's future economic security rests in our hands.

Saving Social Security and Medicare is important to all of our Nation's seniors, but let me explain why it is especially critical to women and their families. Women are twice as likely as men to live with a chronic health care condition. Women receive Social Security and Medicare longer than men, and for all women over age 65, 60 percent of their retirement income comes from Social Security. Often, Social Security and Medicare are their only hope for maintaining a reasonable standard of living and some degree of independence and dignity.

If we fail to protect the solvency of both of these important safety net programs, my generation will become a burden on our children. Our grandchildren will not have the same economic opportunities that we had simply because their parents will be taking care of us. More and more older Americans would fall deep into poverty, further straining family and government resources, and most important the emotional and physical health of seniors.

My Republican colleagues claim they have created a lock box for Social Security and Medicare. However, the Republican proposal simply continues to reserve the Social Security trust fund surplus for Social Security. But, they do not provide any additional resources for either Social Security or Medicare and they do nothing to improve their solvency. Their lockbox is an empty promise.

We can argue about the economic threat posed by this package of tax cuts targeted to the more affluent and geared towards increased consumption, but I think we should be talking instead about maintaining the most successful economic stability programs ever implemented by the federal government—Social Security and Medicare. Can you imagine the economic upheaval that the insolvency of Social Security or Medicare would cause? I can assure my colleagues that hard

working Americans want economic security in their retirement years, not tax breaks they may never even see or benefit from.

That's an important point, Mr. President. This tax bill, which would do nothing for Federal initiatives—from Social Security to Medicare, from transportation infrastructure to education, from Section 8 housing to clean air and water—that raise the quality of life of low and middle income Americans would then give three-fourths of the benefits in return to the top one-fifth of income earners. The average tax cut for the bottom 60 percent of taxpayers—with incomes of \$38,200 and below—would be \$139 per year. And in return for that tax cut, that same family will have to worry even more about taking care of elderly parents, about where they will find money to help their kids go to college since there are fewer Pell Grants, and about how they get to spend some time with their kids when they are on congested highways for hours each day. And to top it all off, when the family goes on vacation to see our nation's national parks, the gates will be closed.

I will support the alternative drafted by my Democratic friends on the Finance Committee. The alternative would meet many of our priorities for any tax bill we send to the President.

The Democratic alternative would provide broad-based relief to the more than 70 percent of taxpayers claiming the standard deduction. It would remove three million taxpayers from the tax rolls. It would also provide marriage penalty relief. These are real benefits targeted to precisely the lower and middle Americans that need it the most.

The Democratic alternative would allow 100 percent deductibility of health insurance costs for self-employed individuals and include a 30 percent tax credit for individuals without employer-sponsored plans. Since the Senate failed to pass a strong Patients' Bill of Rights, the least we can do is make health insurance more accessible to all Americans.

The Democratic alternative would make public school modernization a high priority. It would provide \$24 billion in modernization bonds. Mr. President, this would send a strong message to students, parents and administrators that this Congress cares about providing the education infrastructure we desperately need.

The Democratic alternative would provide tax relief for our nation's struggling farmers and ranchers. It would establish Farm and Ranch Risk Management FARRM, accounts so that producers could better manage their income to reduce risk. Given that it is unlikely Congress will act to improve the long-term safety net for growers this year, FARRM accounts are the least we can do.

I urge my colleagues to vote for the Democratic alternative. A vote for the Democratic alternative is a vote for re-

sponsible tax relief and responsible government. At a time when most Americans do not have much faith in Congress, let us not compound that sentiment with responsible tax politics. We have worked so hard to correct the misguided policies of the past. As we move forward into the next century, let's learn the lessons of the past and reject the Republican tax plan in front of us.

RETIREMENT SECURITY PROVISIONS IN TAXPAYER REFUND ACT OF 1999

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I rise to address several important provisions in the tax relief legislation that has been reported out of the Senate Finance Committee.

In the last few years, I have taken an especial interest in reforming our federal entitlement programs and our tax policies so as to recognize and to prepare for the retirement of the Baby Boom generation that will begin in 2008. During the last Congress, I was appointed by Majority Leader Trent LOTT to chair a Senate Republican Task Force on Retirement Security, on which Chairman ROTH served, and provided the benefit of his experience and his enduring commitment to promoting retirement saving. Our task force produced a bill, numbered S. 883 in the last Congress, several provisions of which were included in the 1997 reconciliation bill. I am pleased to see that several more have been included in this year's reconciliation bill.

I would like to review several of these provisions and to discuss their significance.

Chairman ROTH has devoted several years of his career to promoting increased personal saving through individual retirement accounts. His IRA legislation, the Roth-Breaux bill, was included in its entirety as the first title of our comprehensive bill. The Chairman succeeded in passing some of the provisions of this legislation during reconciliation last time around, including the back-loaded IRA that has become known as the "Roth IRA." This time, the Finance Committee mark moves the ball still further forward on expanding the saving in individual retirement accounts. It increases the contributions that can be made to these accounts, as well as expanding the number of individuals who can participate in them. Now more than ever, with the Baby boomers poised on the brink of retirement, ready to move from being earners and investors to being consumers, "all saving is good saving." It is a very propitious time to propose that individual saving be promoted and encouraged.

I stress that we score these provisions, for our own accounting purposes, as "revenue losers," but this is misleading. This is not saving that is "lost"—it is only "lost" to the federal government. This saving and investment will result in much-needed contributions to capital formation and to economic growth. This is a far superior use of this money than collecting it to fuel current government consumption.